



February 17, 2022

Testimony of Anna Witkowski and Marc E. Jaffe before the Appropriations Committee Public Hearing on Proposed FY 23 Adjustments for Elementary & Secondary and GGA Agencies:

Good evening Sen. Oster, Rep. Walker, and members of the Committee. My name is Anna Witkowski and I am the Chief Education Officer at CLC, Children's Learning Centers of Fairfield County. I am joined by my colleague Marc Jaffe, our CEO.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on the Governor's proposed budget for the OEC. Unfortunately the funding is dramatically insufficient and will lead to a collapse of the industry with dire statewide consequences. .

We will talk hard numbers. CLC is the largest non-profit early childhood education (ECE) center based program solely focused on ECE in CT. We serve about 923 children ages 0-5 in 8 centers in Stamford. We have 220 employees and enable 1600 parents to work. We are a \$16 million dollar a year organization with a 9 figure annual economic impact.

Our economic reality. It costs us about \$16,500 per year/per student in our School Readiness program which is critically 51 weeks a year, 10 hours a day. By 2023/24, that \$16,500 will increase to about \$19,000. The driver -- Minimum wage increase which we support. It was \$9.15 in 2015 and by next year, \$15 dollars, a 60% increase in 8 years. Our largest revenue stream is the per child reimbursement which was \$8,900 in 2015 and is \$8,900 today in 2022. Unfunded mandate, wage compression and no ability to hire talent. There are over 1300 job postings on Indeed for EC Educators.

We have multiple revenue streams, SR reimbursement, C4K, family fees, CACFP totaling about \$14,000 per child. Which leaves a \$2,500 per child gap and means CLC has to raise annually over \$2MM in the private sector to break even. Next year, over \$4MM-and we can't do it.

I know you have lots of calls on your capital. But the ROI on ECE is better than any other ed program, 13% per annum. **We need the per student reimbursement increased to \$14,500.** Charter schools are funded \$11,525/annum/child by SDE for school day, school year which equates to \$22,000 per child full day/full year.

Lastly, the consequences of not responding to this industry crisis is its collapse with tens of thousands of folks unemployed, hundred thousand plus parents withdrawing from the workforce and CT plunged into a recession.

Thank you and we appreciate your listening.

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